

Mahdi wants a lot more local interaction

UAE boss seeks greater inputs from high-profile coaches

By Kenny Laurie

UAE national team coach Mahdi Ali believes the likes of Pep Guardiola and Antonio Conte should pass on their knowledge to local football coaches to help grow football in the region.

Some of world football's biggest names were in the country this week at the eighth Dubai International Sports Conference and last night's Globe Soccer Awards. But while the names such as Cristiano Ronaldo, Xavi and Franck Ribery have spoken to a select audience in Dubai, Ali believes more should be done to make better use of their time in the UAE.

Speaking at the Global Soccer Awards where he was awarded the GCC Coach of the Year, Mahdi said: "It's very important to see the big coaches and hear them answer questions. And I was speaking with an organiser and I hope they make training sessions for coaches while they are here."

"At the end of the day, they are coaches and we want to know what is going on. They are at the highest level with a lot of experiences and we want to learn from them."

"I hope that in the future they make it part of the event that the coaches have sessions with local coaches to pass on their wisdom and to help them learn."



Well done: Juventus boss Antonio Conte was voted the Best Coach of the Year.

Mahdi went onto praise the event that saw Guardiola and Ribery recognised, among others, but as a passionate football man, the UAE coach believes that extending knowledge is more important than anything else.

Mahdi said: "I think the Global Soccer Awards a successful event especially now that is a recognised event and gives global recognition of the UAE and for Dubai."

"It's great for all the sports people who are here. The coaches of the UAE can come here and gain

"They are at the highest level and we want to learn from them" - Mahdi Ali

experience. New things that they are implementing now at the top level of football, they can pass that onto the coaches here.

"We can see what the updates are globally. It's a good opportunity to gain this experience."

While the UAE coach may have hoped for more input from the esteemed guests at the event, Guardiola and Ribery did give some insight into their success and philosophies.

Awarded with the Media Attraction in Football and Most Successful Coach prizes, Guardiola spoke about the importance of playing entertaining as well as winning football.

"I focus only on the game, but it is a global sport," said the Spaniard.

"In England, Spain and Germany every game goes into all the homes and it is global so we try to entertain."

"We are not doing anything innovative in coaching, it is the talent that provides the best innovation. The best players give the best innovations in the sport."

Guardiola's superstar winger at Bayern Munich Franck Ribery expanded on his and his coach's ideas of the way football is played and believes that the Spaniard is the best man to take his club forward.

"The Bundesliga is a strong league and it is our philosophy and culture to attack, we score many goals and we put on a show."

"I'm happy at the moment because Pep won everything at Barca, he knows how to win the Champions League and the league and we can win things with this kind of coach."



Honoured: Mahdi Ali collects his GCC Coach of the Year award from Fabio Capello (l).



Pictures: Getty Images



Getty Images

Positive: Busacca (l) feels prospective Cup referees have been trained well enough.



Stars of the show: Bayern Munich player Franck Ribery (c) with former Barca player Deco (r) in Dubai last night.



Man of the moment: Pep Guardiola (c) was adjudged the Most Successful Coach.

Guardiola gives the credit to players as he gets top honour

By Joy Chakravarty

Pep Guardiola proclaimed himself "lucky" after claiming two Global Soccer awards last night.

The Bayern Munich coach, who won two Champions League and three La Liga titles with Barcelona, was named the Most Successful Coach, as well as the Best Media Attraction in Football.

While Franck Ribery won the Globe Soccer Player of the Year after his exploits in 2013 with Bayern Munich and French national team, Spanish midfielder Xavier Hernandez and the now-retired Portuguese star Deco were honoured with Globe Soccer Player Career Awards.

Real Madrid and Portugal forward Cristiano Ronaldo was voted the Fans' Favourite, an award that was presented to him on Saturday when he inaugurated the eighth Dubai International Sports Conference.

Bayern Munich was chosen Globe Soccer's Best Club of the Year. The Champions League winners were chosen by an international jury ahead of Chelsea and Juventus, winners of last two Serie A titles – the other two shortlisted teams.

After picking up his second award for the night, Guardiola said: "I am a lucky guy. I am lucky to have such great players in my teams and I am lucky to have the support of such great clubs."

After being named the Best Media Attraction in Football, Guardiola said it was an important role of the coaches and players to make sure they keep football entertaining and attractive for fans and media.

"I am lucky to have such great players in my teams"

– Guardiola

Juventus boss Antonio Conte, who has guided his team to two successive Serie A titles and to the top of the table again this season, was declared the Globe Soccer Best Coach of the Year.

UAE national coach Mahdi Ali, who has guided the team to Gulf Cup triumph and now into the 2015 Asian Cup, was named the Best Coach in the GCC. Mahdi was handed the award by Fabio Capello, the legendary Italian and current coach of the Russian national team.

"It was a great season for us and it gives us a lot of confidence going into 2014. I would like to dedicate this award to my entire team that has made this possible," said Mahdi.

Well-known Italian agent Giovanni Branchini, instrumental in bringing Guardiola to Bayern Munich and someone who has managed several superstars in the game, was honoured with 'Agent Career' Award, while Ronaldo's agent Jorge Mendes was named the 'Best Agent of the Year'. Mendes, who also worked out Jose Mourinho's move to Chelsea this year, won the award for a record fifth time. Italy's Alarico Rossi was named the Best Fan of the Year. Rossi, who coaches youth teams, believes scoring goals is not the only thing you can learn in football, and submitted the winning slogan (Scoring is not the only goal) that won him the award.

Busacca: World Cup referees will be of the highest calibre

By Joy Chakravarty

FIFA's Chief Referee Officer has voiced his belief that the officiating at next year's World Cup would be of the highest standard ever.

Speaking at the eighth Dubai International Sports Conference, which concluded yesterday at Madinat Jumeirah, Massimo Busacca said almost two years of methodical training has been imparted on the prospective referees who will control the matches in Brazil.

Although the actual list of referees will only be announced in May,

a month before the tournament starts, FIFA has hosted a couple of seminars already for the prospective referees, drawn from various parts of the world, including one for the AFC and OFC regions in Dubai in April this year.

Among the key training imparted was protecting players and the image of the game and fair play, better 'reading' of the game, guarantee of decisional consistency and uniformity and understanding different football mentalities and knowledge of various teams.

Swiss Busacca, who retired from

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World Cup games refereed by France's Joel Quiniou, a record

active refereeing duty in 2011 to take up his present role with FIFA, said: "Apart from the fact that a referee has to be physically fit and should have phenomenal amount of concentration, it is imperative that he has a good knowledge of the game and prepares for the match as well as the players do.

"We referees also need to have a sense of responsibility.

"The players have invested a lot of effort and time for big moments like the World Cup, and we should be aware that our mistakes can ruin all that."

But Busacca – who refereed the 2008 Champions League final in Rome between Barcelona and Manchester United – also insisted that respect has to be a two-way street.

"There has to be mutual respect for each other. Referees have to respect the players, but the players have to respect the referees too," he

added. "Sometimes it is impossible to see a decision. With players running so fast all around, sometimes decisions are based on feelings. And let's not forget that referees are human beings too and can make a genuine mistake."

Referees will be given a helping hand at next summer's tournament after FIFA have confirmed officials will be provided vanishing spray to mark out the correct distance at free-kicks for the defensive wall to stand. The spray was successfully trialled at the Club World Cup earlier this month in Morocco.